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ABSTRACT

A short-term training course for part-time adult instructors (a program of the Strathcona, Alberta, Further Education Council) has been offered eight times. Findings from questionnaires completed by respondents indicated that over 97 percent want to take the course. The most obviously desired topics are adult learners' needs and characteristics. The least useful topics, according to the instructor/participants, are writing course objectives and individual lesson plans. An in-class needs assessment showed that professional development is the first concern. The course, Sharing Your Skills: Teaching Adults, is six hours in length. The set topics of the first three hours are introduction (how to start a class of adults), needs assessment, and contracting. Other content of these three hours includes a slide-tape presentation, a computerized precourse assignment about adult learners' characteristics, and the topics of learning styles and group development. The second three hours are the "flexible agenda." Two or three mini-lectures cover topics requested by the class. Then participants practice teaching by reading a handout on a particular topic and presenting the topic to the class. The final mini-lecture is on evaluation, and participants evaluate the course. (The format of this paper is that of a detailed outline. Overhead transparency masters used during this presentation are appended.) (YLB)

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Sharing Your Skills

Teaching Adults

The Training of Instructors to Teach Non-Credit Adult Education Courses

A Program of the

Strathcona Further Education Council

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Presented by Anne Ryan
For the NWAEA/PACE Conference
May 1986

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Presentation Notes

Introductions

Me to group: Why am I doing this presentation?
Council Interest
Master's Project
Group to each other: Answering who you are, where you come from and why you came to this conference.

Needs Assessment

Tell me why you have chosen to attend this session?
What information do you think I have that you want?
Help me to emphasize what you want to learn and gloss over or omit what you don't want.
Gather feedback and put on overhead.
Note: Save these notes and use for promotion of next class and to revise the outlines of courses for future courses.

Overhead: Presentation Outline

History of Instructor Training Project

Further Education Councils in Alberta **Handouts on Alta. Councils**
1975 **legislation passed initiating** Fur. Ed. councils all over Alta.
Strathcona became Council in 1975.
Strathcona has, until 2 years ago, been basically a council that was in existence for the purpose of getting the grants for instruction.
Each of the 85 Councils in Alta. have the **automony** to function in the way that they see fit, providing they do not break any of the regulations that govern them.
Until 2 years ago each member agency of the Strathcona Council was doing their own instructor training, if they wanted to spend time on that subject.
This project started 2 years ago, following an informal discussion at one of the council meetings where we all discovered that instructor training was a concern for all agencies.
As Chairperson of the Council, I was selected to head this project.

Investigation of what others are doing.

As part of my class work, I undertook to find out what training programs are available. I hoped that I would find a ready made program that I could recommend to the Council to implement.

I found several courses that are taught on a full time basis, during the week day that were 20 to 100 hours in length. These courses were not what the Council was looking for.

Clarification re Council Instructors: Our instructors are individuals who do not make instructing adults their primary career, it is a love, a sideline, a special interest to them. On the whole, their courses last less than 30 hours. They may teach as few as one course per year to as many as 10, the average being 3 courses per year. The Majority of courses lasting 6 -10 hours. A course organizer cannot expect an instructor who teaches such a small amout to take a long course to learn about instructing adults.

Process

Upon reporting the results of the search for the "perfect" course to the council, it was decided that we would make up our own course that would take into consideration the special needs of our instructors. Again, that responsibility fell on yours truly.

The council sponsored a pilot course. It was held at a local high school. I had requested the maximum for the class to be 12. On the first night several people who had been told that the class was full, showed up anyway, so we had a class of 16.

The response to this class showed the Coucil members that we were not just imagining that there was a need for this training. Instructors were also obviously feeling the need for some specific training.

So often we, the supplier of courses, make assumptions about what people need and design courses around that need. Sometimes we are right, sometimes we're wrong. This time we had hit a real need.

Questionnaire

Following the first course offering the next step was to design a questionnaire that would give us the information we needed to develop the courses for the instructors. The pilot had been very successful, but could we make the course even better?

The questionnaire was distributed to each of our Council members and they were asked to photocopy it and distribute it to their instructors. They were also asked to collect their own questionnaires and return them to me. I have no way of knowing how many questionnaires were sent out to instructors. If you intend to duplicate this process, this would be an area that you could spend some time considering.

Or perhaps, as in my case, it is not that important to know exactly how many questionnaires were distributed.

The questionnaire we developed is included in your handout package. If you decide to use it, or something like it, I suggest that you make some **changes** in the list of topics instructors would consider most beneficial and least useful (question 11). You could ask instructors to **rank order** their preferences, 1,2,3. I would also suggest that **Adult Learning Styles, Agency Related Topics and Group Growth/Dynamics be included in your list.**

I would also suggest that **more information** be asked **about** the **instructors.** Things like marital status, numbers and ages of children. When it came time to crunch the numbers that were the results of the questionnaire, it was apparent that there was a group who found certain times to come to a course difficult. It could be because of family, or it could be because of their own teaching schedule, but my results will never show the real reasons.

Delivery of Courses Based upon Questionnaire Results

The course that I will be describing to you is based upon the information that was gathered in the questionnaire. Because I had omitted the inclusion of Adult Learning Styles and Group Development in the questionnaire, I had to make a value judgement about including them in the course. I chose, based upon some research, to include them in the course.

The course has been offered 8 times. We found that the **most appropriate time** to offer the course is just before the beginning of term. When we offered it in the middle of term, either the course didn't run, or it was filled with potential instructors. When it was full of potential instructors, the discussions were really lacking, and the practise teaching sessions were not terribly successful.

Research Findings

97.6% SAID YES Overhead

Of all the respondents who answered the questionnaire, 97.6% wanted to take an instructor training course. This indicates one of two things. Either we have a lot of keen instructors or because they are not only teachers but takers of courses, they were interested in a free course.

One of the major difficulties I had in trying to figure out what should be included in a short instructor training course was where is the "A" or **where is the starting point.** In almost every field of endeavour I can think about there is an entry

point, something upon which everything else is built. In horsemastership, the starting point is catching the horse and putting on the halter. In learning to read, it is learning the vowels, in mathematics it is learning 1-10, etc. Where was the starting point for an instructor in adult education?

The results of question 11 (most and least beneficial topics) are included in your handout. This question was my way of trying to answer the question of where is the starting point. **Overhead Most and Least Desired Topics** The most obviously desired topics from our instructors were **Needs of Adult Learners** and **Characteristics of Adult Learners.**

The **least useful** topics were **Writing Course Objectives** and **Individual Lesson Plans.** These particular topics indicated to me that the difficulty that I have as an agency administrator in getting course outlines from instructors, was getting instructors to do what they least wanted to learn to do!

There were two other topics that instructors were eager to learn that are **not quite so apparent** when you look at the numbers on your handout. These topics are **Instructional Techniques** and **Enhancing Motivation of Students.** The conclusion about these topics was arrived at by subtracting the numbers on the Least Useful lists from the Most Beneficial lists. Or, the **best cancelled the least.** All the other topics came out as being rather neutral (null) as to instructor preferences.

The results of the questionnaire also revealed that the course could be offered on any day or combination of days except on Sunday. There was no strong preference between the two.

The second page **(overhead)** of data that you have in your handout is the compilation of the **in class needs assessment** I conducted with all of the classes that have been held. **Professional Development**, which was not ranked by the questionnaire turned out to be the **first concern.** Included in this category are such things as "resources -readings on new things, confidence in my teaching ability, networking or masterminding, refresher, new ways to improve myself as a teacher, confidence in public speaking, marketing and dressing appropriately to teach. You will notice that on the in class needs assessment, Writing Course Objectives, virtually came last but, **Individual Lesson Plans** places **higher** on the list. One can intrepret that in a variety of ways, I choose to think that having a lesson plan for each class is seen as more important than setting objectives for a course.

Overhead: Outline

What's Happening In Alberta?

In Alberta we have a **Minister's Advisory Committee on Further Education.** In 1985 this committee recommended to the Minister (of Adv. Ed.) that there was a "Need for training programs for instructors". It is hoped that this year they will recommend a way that a training program can be implemented. Several ways have been suggested to them including a level system that looks something like the Sport Canada National Coaching Certificate Program. A system that will teach the generic information that is important for instructors of adults to posses.

The second rather exciting thing that is happening is that the **ECAC** has recommended to ACCESS NETWORK that there is a need to purchase or produce an instructor training package. The ECAC is a group of 5 people who represent all the adult education sectors in Alberta. All but one sector, the Universities, has recognized this as a need. ACCESS is presently pursuing this priority.

The Course - Sharing Your Skills: Teaching Adults

Instructor's Objectives Overhead

These are objectives that the Council holds as reasons for the course to be held and persued on an ongoing basis. You have this list as a part of your handout. They all tend to look a little like motherhood statements yet serve to be the backbone for the course.

Go to overhead and comment.

A-V media (not learn how to use)
Discuss concerns - bring concerns back to council
Potential inst. - direct to appropriate agency.

Learning/Experience Objectives Overhead

These are the objectives that have been set for the participants in the course. Because there is no exam, there is no attempt to tie objectives to behavior. This course is an introductory course, one that attempts to develop a thirst for more knowledge. Therefore, the course becomes one more of an experience rather than just the delivery of knowledge. A course that encourages more learning.

Go to overhead and comment.

Science / Art - hard fact vs. ambiance

Mechanics

The course is a total of **6 hours in length.** It has been offered in **two evenings** and on a **Saturday.** I find that teaching in two evenings is a great deal easier simply because of trying to meet the needs of the class. When the class is taught in a full day, there must be a photocopier available during the lunch break so that the handouts for the afternoon can be made. Otherwise the instructor would be having a great deal of paper to bring back home again.

Outline of Course: Overhead

The **first three hours of the course are set topics.** They are designed to get the class working together as adults are suppose to work, sharing their collective knowledge. I spend a fair amout of time on the introductions and the needs assessment.

The **introductions** phase is not designed to just introduce participants to participants and instructor, but to introduce the whole concept of how to start a class of adults. We start by modeling how to start a class and then discuss what was done, why it was done and alternate ways of handling introductions. The second night there is an alternate way demonstrated. I usually stress to the class that the beginnings of a class can often make or break a class, so much thought should go into the first few minutes of a class.

The **needs assessment** part of the class is also handled in a modeling manner. Many instructors have not seen (and frequently can't see) a need to find out why participants have signed up for their course. One of the major learnings for these instructors is to find out that they are hired to teach what students want to learn, not just what they want to teach.

Following the needs assessment is the **contracting.** I tell the class that there might be times when a student comes to learn something that you have no intention of covering, tell that student you will not be covering that subject and then allow the student to leave if they so desire. This has happened to me, as I'm sure it has happened to you and the adult student appreciates this mature approach to learning.

Contracting and disclosing the prepared outline work hand in hand. I usually contract with the students before disclosing the outline, but I also make sure that the students understand how their needs fit into the prepared outline.

The **slide tape** presentation is then presented. It is amazing to me how much the instructors identify with the presentation.

I have seen the presentation so many times and continually see so much more each time I see it. Yet the instructors seem to pick up the entire content on the first viewing. Their concerns are parroted back to them. They begin to see that this field of adult education contains their concerns and many others they haven't yet contemplated.

I have the **slide tape presentation with me** and if we have time and you would like to view it, I would be delighted to show it to you.

This course has in classroom experiences as well as new ways of learning. There is a **pre-course assignment on a computer.** For most everyone this is a totally new experience, learning from a computer. This is a program I put together and I **have the disks** for the program as well as a **complete printout** of the program with me if anyone would like to see it. I designed the program so that anyone could do it. It is so very simple. The idea was not to make a complicated terrifying experience, but a simple experience that would replicate the experience that many adults have in comming to a course. Fear and trembling ! !

There is ample time for discussion during the whole course. I try to help the participants tie the information they are learning into their their classroom experiences.

Learning Styles is the next topic. We use the **Kolb Learning Style Inventory** for each person to fill out. This is followed by a general discussion that ties the Characteristics and Learning Styles together. I find that many of the instructors have some great **Ah Ha's** at this point. They have experienced trying to teach something to someone who just didn't seem to get what they were giving. The understanding of that process occurs during this segment.

I include **group development** in the "set" part of the curriculum for one reason. If an instructor is unaware (as many are) that there are natural stages of group development, then when the storming stage arrives it can discourage even the most gifted artisan. This topic takes no more than 5 mins. to cover, yet has proven to be a very beneficial topic for several of the instructors.

To close the class I **review the needs assessment** checking that what I think I have covered, the participants also think I have covered. I also ask if there is anything else they think I should be adding to the list.

Overhead: Flexible Agenda

The second three hours are what I call the **Flexible Agenda.** It is here that I must put together a range of topics that invariablely come up in an instructor training program. I have been asked to comment on what an instructor wears, how to change voice quality, how to run A-V equipment and a whole range of things that would not normally be covered in a 6 hour course on instuctor training. I have not, to date, been asked to cover something on which I have no information , although I don't spend a lot of time on these topics, I always try to give something.

I use the same process every course although the topics have varried for almost every class.

There are usually two or three **mini-lectures** on various topics, depending upon the requests the class has made for information. These mini-lectures are interspersed throughout the evening. The **most common mini-lectures are on Teaching Techniques and Evaluation.**

There is quite a bit of the session taken up with a **Work Session**. The work session consists of giving out several copies of a handout on a particular topic to a group of three or four. The assignment is to read the handout and then present the topic to the class. **(Next overhead)** I have a variety of materials for use in the presentation. The groups work very hard with their projects and I always really enjoy the results. The less experienced and potential instructors find the presentations quite difficult, but they always manage to muddle their way through the topic. We have enjoyed dramatic presentations, comical sketches, straight lectures, panel discussions, debates and one demonstration in the classes.

The mini-lecture on **Evaluation** is always left to last. Part of the reason for this is to allow the new information to be put into effect right away. The class always makes up their own evaluations of the class they have just finished taking.

The **Evaluation of the class** is done both in the written form as well as in the verbal form. It not only touches on what was learned in the class but what these instructors want to learn in the future. During my last class, I did an experiment with the clothes I wore during the class, coming quite casually one night and quite formally the second night. I felt that there was a very different response I got from the second night, a response I did not like. I intend to try this experiment again with the next class. I did ask the class to comment on my

dress and any effect it could have had upon them. They said that there had been no effect, but I cannot be convinced of that.

Return to Presentation Outline Overhead

Evaluations

The evaluations for this short six hour class have been more than encouraging. There is a thirst for classes of this sort and the instructors who participated in these classes enjoyed the course and **WANT MORE**. The one general comment I can make to you about the evaluations is that they all indicate that I try to cover too much material in the time allowed. This is offset by their comments about the amount and quality of the handouts for future reference.

Follow-up

Over and over again the instructors asked for more. More ideas, more knowledge, more reading materials, more anything that relates to teaching. The Strathcona Further Education Council is toying with the idea of having an Instructors Conference. A weekend affair, with a variety of sessions, speakers and ideas presented in a display fashion. It is a dream for the instructors, it is also a dream for me. I think that a great deal of learning, networking and growing could happen at such an event. No date has been set yet for our Council's Conference, but I know that with the instructors pushing for further instructor education we will be hosting other courses for them.

I would like to end this presentation with an excerpt from a letter I received from a person who took this course.

"IDEAS FOR NEW CLASSES
It seems to me prospects for lifelong learning abound throughout the community, in business clubs, professional associations, through local radio and TV (consider the success of "Reach For The Top") even hockey and football clubs. Remember the "Great Books" phenomena which gained impetus among the factory workers of Chicago and spread across the continent, bringing the joys of classical literature to multitudes in all walks of life. The movement was housed in back rooms, in libraries, in living rooms, in conference rooms, in corners of community halls.

It's certain lifelong learning is an old idea whose time has come around again to excite the most traditional of educators. As Allan Tough emphasizes, our nation fixation on credits and credentials has created a backlash. For too long now, as Tough says, degrees have been used as fly

swatters, to kill unpapered people. During my lifetime I have seen many new directions in higher education, from junior colleges to general purpose schools, to the multiversity, but none seems to have the impact of the new "invisible" universities all across the country (all around the globe generally)."

Thanks Anne!

What more can I say?

Are there any questions that I can attempt to answer?

Presentation Overheads

Outline

Introductions

Needs Assessment of this Group:

- Why have you choosen to attend this session?
- What information do you think I have that you want?

History of Instructor Training Project

- Further Education Councils in Alberta
- Investigation of what others are doing
- Process:
  - Further Education Council Agreement
  - Pilot Course
  - Questionnaire
  - Delivery of Courses Based upon Questionnaire Results

Research Findings

What's Happening in Alberta

The Course: Sharing Your Skills - Teaching Adults

- Objectives
- Mechanics
- Outline
- Evaluations
- Follow-up

Questions

Sharing Your Skills - Teaching Adults

Instructor's Objectives

1. To Gather instructors from differing fields of expertise
2. To model appropriate adult instructor behavior
3. To discuss basic skills needed by an instructor of adults
4. To have a short practise teaching session w/o evaluation
5. To demonstrate the use of a variety of A-V media
6. To demonstrate a variey of teaching techniques
7. To discuss concerns of instructors
8. To model an appropriate adult learning environment
9. To acquaint potential instructors with the field of adult education

Sharing Your Skills - Teaching Adults

Learning/ Experience Objectives

1. To experience the accepted methods of teaching adults

2. To understand that teaching adults is not just a science (presenting materials) but is also an art (knowing how, when, where etc. of the presentation)

3. To develop a thirst for more knowledge of the adult educator's role

4. To practise teaching adults

5. To share issues and concerns with fellow instructors, learning that "I am not the only one"

6. To discover alternative methods of presenting materials

Sharing Your Skills - Teaching Adults

Course Outline

Set Agenda: First 3 hours

1. **Introductions:**
   Showing a variety of ways to handle the first class introductions of participants.
   Materials required:
   - Name tags
   - Small felt pens
   - Pencils
   - Scribble paper

2. **Needs Assessment:**
   Why are you here?
   What do you what to gain from this class?
   Materials required:
   - Flip chart
   - Large felt pens

3. **Contracting:**
   From the class needs list contract what will and what will not be covered.

4. **Disclose prepared outline of course, reinforce contract**
   Materials required"
   - Prepared flipchart outline
   - OR Prepared overhead
   - Overhead projector

5. **Slide Tape Presentation:**

   Sharing Your Skills - Teaching Adults

   Materials required:

   - Slide projector
   - tape recorder
   - screen
   - slides and tape

6. **Characteristics of Adlut Learners:**

   Discussion of pre-course assignment done on computer.

   Materials required:

   - Handout from computer program: Characteristics of Adult Learners

7. **Learning Styles:**

   Participants use Kolb's questionnaire to determine their own learning style. A discussion about all learning styles and how learning styles affect teaching styles and methods.

   Materials required:

   - Kolb Learning Style Inventory
   - Pencils/pens

8. **Group Development**

   A mini-lecture covering forming, storming, norming, performing.

9. **Return to Needs Assessment**

   Check off what has been covered - ask if anything should be added

10. **Close First Class**

Note: Questions are entertained during the whole class.

Flexible Agenda: Last 3 hours

1. Re-introductions:

Depending upon the needs assessment, any of these topics can be covered:

Instructional techniques
Designing evalutation tools
Motivation of adult students
Climate setting in the classroom
Individual lesson plans
Writing objectives
Role of the instructor
Professional development
Agency related topics
Differences between teaching adults and teaching children
Almost any other topic that relates to teaching adults

The second evening has continuously been varried in the topics covered but the process has been consistent.

The Process:

2. Two or three mini-lectures

3. A work sesson

Small groups are assigned topics on which they are to prepare a short presentation

4. Short teaching practise

Each group presents their topics
Materials required:
Flipchart paper and felt pens
Sheets of acetate and acetate pens

5. **Evaluation**

   A look at the elements involved in developing an evaluation followed by the development of the class evaluation

6. **Evaluation of the class**

   Using the developed evaluation, participants write their thoughts and give verbal feedback that will increase the learnings for the classes that follow.

Note: -Both classes contain a 15 to 20 minute coffee break.
-Discussion between participants is encouraged at all times, but not to disrupt the class learning.
-Part of the evaluation (verbal) is questioning of what can happen in the future for instructors of adults in Strathcona.